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DEPARTMENT FOR D, DRL AND WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2016
TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV KDEM KCRM NU
SUBJECT: CPDH FINDS MORE EVIDENCE OF SANDINISTA 1980S
ATROCITIES IN SECOND TRIP TO ATLANTIC COAST

REF: A. 05 MANAGUA 1117
B. 05 MANAGUA 2426
C. 05 MANAGUA 2646
D. 05 MANAGUA 2998
E. MANAGUA 119

Classified By: AMBASSADOR PAUL TRIVELLI. REASONS 1.4 (B,D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Between March 14-23, representatives of the Nicaraguan Permanent Human Rights Commission (CPDH) NGO carried out the second of three planned trips to Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast to document charges of crimes against humanity and genocide brought against Sandinista leaders for acts committed against the Miskito ethnic group in the early 1980s. On March 24, the CPDH brought Vidal Poveda Muller, a survivor of the infamous 1981 Leimus massacre, to the Embassy to meet visiting DRL PDAS Jonathan Farrar. The CPDH will make its final trip to the Atlantic Coast on April 18 and plans to file the accumulated charges with domestic institutions by the end of May. Assuming the case goes nowhere in Nicaragua (the likely outcome), the CPDH will file the case with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) at the end of August. The Miskito community strongly supports the CPDH investigation, but wants to be certain that the USG will see the case through to conclusion. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) CPDH leaders Nicholas Bolanos, Raymond Genie, and Marcos Carmona came to the Embassy on March 24 to provide a readout on the second CPDH trip and to meet visiting PDAS Jonathan Farrar. Accompanying the CPDH leaders was Vidal Poveda Muller, a survivor of the December 23, 1981 Leimus massacre where Sandinista forces executed 36 Miskito males. While the first CPDH trip to the coast focused on documenting complaints of murder, torture, and disappearance in the area around Puerto Cabezas, this time the CPDH team traveled along the Rio Coco (Nicaragua's border with Honduras) to the remote Miskito communities along the river where the Sandinistas committed many of their worst abuses and where many of the survivors still reside.

LEIMUS MASSACRE SURVIVOR RECOUNTS HIS STORY, SEEKS JUSTICE

3. (C) Vidal Poveda began the meeting by relating the details of how he survived the Leimus massacre. Poveda, who lost an arm in the episode, recounted how the 37 men, including his brother, were apprehended in Leimus (near the Honduran border) on December 20, 1981 and moved to a small shop where they were subsequently divided into groups. They were then removed from the premises one group at a time. The Sandinistas took his group of four men, including his brother, to a site where they were ordered to dig a common grave and bury those who had been executed in the previous group. Next, they were ordered to leave and were shot as they tried to flee.

4. (C) Poveda was struck by three bullets but managed to escape to Honduras. He explained that all of the men were Miskitos and civilians, mostly small farmers, ranchers, and carpenters. A Moravian pastor and his son were among the victims. According to Poveda, one of the executioners, Eliseo Ingram, resides in the United States. POL arranged a meeting for Poveda with OAS demining program director Carlos Orozco to discuss the provision of a prosthesis and therapy for Poveda and to seek OAS help to demine the area surrounding the common Leimus grave. CPDH leaders have told embosfs that such assistance for survivors of Sandinista abuses on the Atlantic Coast is crucial because the FSLN is actively seeking to buy off destitute survivors by offering them money and houses in return for dropping their complaints. (NOTE: On March 27, the CPDH called to inform us that the OAS Demining Assistance Program will provide Poveda a prosthesis and therapy.)

CPDH PLANS FINAL TRIP TO COAST AND WILL THEN FILE LEGAL COMPLAINTS IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

5. (C) The CPDH will make its third trip to the Atlantic Coast on April 18, focusing on the area around the municipality of Prinzapolka to the

MISKITO LEADER WANTS ASSURANCES OF USG COMMITMENT TO CASE

6. (C) In a separate meeting on March 27, ex-Contra Osorno ("Blas") Coleman, who is the main force behind the Miskito complaint against the FSLN leadership, told poloffs that he had accompanied the CPDH representatives on their second trip to the coast and will be with them for the third trip as well. Coleman stated that the CPDH investigation has been well received by the local population. Coleman emphasized that the Miskito community wants to be sure that the USG will see their case through to the end and not lose interest midway. Coleman opined that failure to pursue the case to an IACHR verdict would be devastating to victims and their families, as well as to those local leaders (including Coleman) who are putting their lives and credibility on the line by taking on the formidable FSLN political machine.

7. (C) Coleman shared that other prominent leaders of the

Yatama political party of which Coleman is a part have been bought by the FSLN, including Steadman Fagoth and party leader Brooklyn Rivera, and are doing all they can to undermine the CPDH investigation and persuade Miskitos to change their stories in return for FSLN largesse. According to Coleman, Fagoth is openly challenging the investigation and blaming the USG for all 1980s rights abuses on the coast, while Rivera is more subtly arguing against the investigation behind the scenes.

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